Liberia. The U. S. navy in connection with the foundation, growth and prosperity of the republic of Liberia. An address delivered before the American colonization society, by R. W. Shufeldt ...

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AN ADDRESS DELIVERED BEFORE THE AMERICAN COLONIZATION SOCIETY BY R. W. SHUFELDT, **Commodore U. S. Navy.**

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Gentlemen: It is not inappropriate to this occasion that an officer of the United States navy should address your honorable society, and although your committee might easily have chosen a more worthy representative of that branch of the public service, they could have found none more sincerely interested in your cause, or more deeply impressed with its importance.

From the first disastrous effort in 1819 to colonize the negroes from the United States, at Sherbro', up to the present time, the navy has contributed, with sword and pen, to advance the interests and protect the rights of the Americo-Africans.

In that year (1819) the United States ship Cyane convoyed to Africa, the Elizabeth, the first emigrant ship, the Mayflower of these new pilgrims, and Lieutenant Townsend lost his life in the duty incidental to landing them The inexorable march of time, however, has placed upon the roll of the distinguished dead, most of those officers whose words and deeds contributed so much to the founding of the Republic of Liberia. First among these, and almost the first in the hearts and memories of his naval brethren, stands the name of Stockton. In 1821, Lieutenant Stockton took command of the Alligator, a vessel sent out by the United States Government at the earnest solicitation of Justice Bushrod Washington, then president of this society, and Francis S. Key, one

of its managers, for the express purpose of selecting a site on the western coast of Africa, better adapted to the purposes of colonization than Sherbro', a place notoriously unhealthy, and in many respects undesirable. The first order issued by Lieutenant-commanding Stockton to the crew of his little craft, while yet in sight of the shores of America, was to throw overboard the “cat” (the lash was then a legal mode of punishment on board of our vessels of war), informing them 4 that he intended to exact their obedience by some other means. He was wiser than perhaps he knew, for, bound on this mission of humanity, there would have been a strange inconsistency in his conduct, had he carried with him into Africa that vile relic of barbarism. Yet this act indicates the character of the man, who in that day, and in the face of current opinion, dared to vindicate, by word and deed, the right of man, black or white, to exemption from a barbarous thraldom, whether upon land or sea. On the 11th of December, 1821, Lieutenant Stockton placed his foot on African soil at Cape Mesurado, and at the risk of his life, wrested from savagery that spot whereon now stands the lighthouse, guiding the mariner to Monrovia, the capital of a new-born republic, and in its firm foundations, and its light, gleaming alternately on land and sea, fitly emblematic of him who ever stood fixed in his strong convictions of the right, and showed to all men the guiding star of his brilliant and spotless character. Liberia, then only an isolated spot of land, now spreads herself to the extent of 500 miles from this point. A narrow belt upon the seashore, slowly but surely widening her influence, lighting up the dark cloud in the background, as year by year she struggles and penetrates here and there, now up a river and then into the forest, like the streak of light in the eastern sky which tells of the coming day. An author says that the name of Stockton will be associated in history with the names of the founders of this now prosperous State, for to his courage and prudence its original acquisition may be ascribed. Accompanied only by one companion, he went into the presence of the native king of that part of the coast, and when threatened with instant death, presented his pistol at the head of the angry chief, cowing the multitude by the danger of their sovereign, and obtaining from the subdued savages the desired territory.

If we add to this achievement in Africa the fact that throughout his brilliant career he adhered with wonderful 5 pertinacity to his idea of punishment without the lash until he obtained, or greatly aided in obtaining, the passage of that law which banished the “cat” from the navy, we may fairly place him high on its rolls as one whose memory we may cherish, and whose deeds we may strive to emulate, while we point him out to the Liberian as the man whose nature, revolting at inhumanity in any form, taught to his own men before landing on African soil, that first lesson of the freedom which Liberians have since learned to appreciate as it deserves.

In strange contrast to the conduct of Commodore Stockton on the subject of corporeal punishment, I remember that of another officer, while lying at Monrovia thirty years ago. In violation of every

form of law, he whipped at the gangway of the ship he commanded, a citizen of Liberia for attempting to carry liquor on board.

The effect of this outrage in Monrovia was exceedingly curious *to the student of human nature, and the friends of the colored race—the sense of humiliation—the shock to their new-born independence* — the deep resentment roused, and yet controlled by the old awe of the white man—the old fear of the slave master. They bore it with meekness, the result of their recent condition of servitude, and consoled themselves, as other nations have done, with the fact that the culprit did not belong to the first society. That officer has long passed into oblivion; pity that the spirit of his act had not perished with him, instead of surviving to trouble these later days.

The name of Perry, among the highest in the annals of naval history, shines with undimmed lustre in the person of Commodore M. C. Perry. While in command of our squadron on the coast of Africa he cruised along the Liberian seaboard, using *force where force was necessary, discretion, combined with firmness always,* and teaching the savage by the tangible argument of gunpowder the power as well as justice of civilization. Under his surveillance the timid colonist became more bold, and the wary savage 6 more circumspect in his hostility, until when he left the station, Gov. Russworm, of Cape Palmas, was constrained to write him, under date of December 25, 1843: “Our prospects have been brighter since you arrived on this coast than ever, and however willing we were before to endure everything for liberty, our hearts swell with gratitude to you for the deep interest expressed in our future wellbeing. That a gracious Providence may long preserve your life for usefulness, is the prayer of every citizen of Maryland in Liberia.” Talking of the influence of gunpowder as an argument with the savage, while visiting the Gaboon river in 1873, in command of the United States steamer Plymouth, we fired a salute to the French flag. One of our missionaries at that station, overjoyed at the sound of the guns, exclaimed, “Fire again, captain; every gun converts a heathen.” There is more truth in this re, mark than appears upon the surface, for the power of gunpowder is the power of civilization; in the mind of the untutored heathen it is divinity personified, and on the border of barbarism, the American gun, under the American flag, is a most powerful ally to the American missionary.

From the time of Perry's command, (1844,) up to the commencement of our civil war, the navy was not without its representatives on the Liberian coast. Many prominent officers not only gave that country their warmest support, but have recorded their meed of praise to its inhabitants. Commodore Israel Abbott, 1845, says: “Although it is the day of small things with our colored colonists in Africa, yet I believe there is no one who has visited them but is favorably impressed with their present condition beyond what was anticipated, and with the belief of their progressive

improvement, and of their growing importance in all the relations concerning Africa and the African race that should interest the Christian philanthropist and statesman."

Commodore Isaac Mayo, 1858, says: "I have long felt the warmest interest in the only scheme which promised 7 relief to the colored people of our country, and this interest was confirmed by my visit to Liberia, when in command of the frigate Macedonian, in the years 1843 and 1844; my more recent observations in this ship convince me that the colonization societies have been crowned with the most substantial success, and that the result of their general philanthropy is no longer doubtful. * * * * I have the strongest faith in the bright future which awaits Liberia, and the strongest confidence that she is to wield the most powerful influence in regenerating Africa.

Commodore Francis H. Gregory, 1855, says: "Previously to my visiting Liberia I had a hope the Colonization Society would be successful; I considered it an experiment, and entertained but little faith, but on my first visit to Monrovia every doubt was dispelled. I visited the people, collectively and individually, and had every opportunity of forming a correct judgment of their condition and prospects. * * * I found the people industrious and happy, apparently in the enjoyment of every domestic comfort, and some of the most opulent having many of the luxuries and delicacies of more famed and refined regions." By those to whom Commodore Gregory was known the value of his testimony will be appreciated. Throughout a long and earnest life this officer devoted all of his time and thought to the service of his country. During the late war his labor in the cause was unceasing and its value inestimable. Worth the more from the fact that it brought nothing to him save the consciousness of work well and honestly performed. When he died the country lost a hero comparatively unknown to fame.

Paymaster Genl. Bridge, in his "Journal of an African Cruiser," remarks: "After having seen much, and reflected upon the subject even to weariness, I write down my opinion that Liberia is firmly planted, and is destined to increase and prosper. This it will do though all further support from the United States be discontinued * * * My faith is firm in a favorable result."

Chaplain Chas. W. Thomas adds his testimony in the following extracts from "Adventures and Observations in Africa:" "Our duty as a Christian nation towards her (Liberia) is clear. Far be it from us to witness with cold blooded indifference the struggles of those who have gone out from us with barbarism and ignorance. If Liberia is a weak and myopic child, it is not ours to look calmly upon her attempts to walk alone, guessing cruelly as to the chances of her making a safe journey; but it is ours, by kind words, to encourage her heart and to lead her by the hand until age shall bring strength to her feet and clearness to her vision.

Perhaps upon the navy list we have no purer and nobler character than the late Rear Admiral A. H. Foote. Foote wielded the sword and the pen of the philanthrophist, the Christian and the patriot. How much the lessons he learned while on the coast of Africa, in command of the frigate Perry, among the iniquities of the slave trade and the struggles of the Liberian colonists had to do with the excellence of his character, may be traced in the history of his life. In a time when our country had not yet emerged from the barbarism of slavery, nor was the navy yet free from its debasing influences, Foote was above them all, and steadily maintained the dignity of a believer in the possibilities of the colored race for advancement as independent freemen, and gave his testimony at all times in favor of the prospects of Liberia. He says: “Civilization with its peace, intelligence with its high aims, are rooted in Africa. The living energy of republicanism is there. Christianity in various influential forms is among the people. Education is advancing, and institutions for public good coming into operation. Native hereditary enmities and factions are yielding perceptibly in all directions to the gentle efficacy of Christian example. All this constitutes a great result.”

The Christian virtues of Admiral Foote are the property of the country. His professional qualities are the 9 inheritance of the navy. These will be remembered as long as we have a country to defend or a navy to defend it.

If Stockton, while on the coast of Africa, banished the lash from the gangway, Foote emptied the grog-tub into that sea. Two great reforms thus accomplished by two great men essential to the well-being of the navy, and although, perhaps, unseen by them, wonderfully consistent with their mission to those shores, as an example to the colonists and a proof to the native that the lash and the rum-barrel were not always the companions of the white man.

The concurrent testimony of these distinguished officers and thoughtful men, embracing the period from the foundation of the colony up to the time of our civil war, expresses not only the hope but the belief that Liberia, poor and weak as she is, yet possesses many of the elements of national wealth and strength, and proves beyond cavil the progress and permanence of that republic.

During the war, while our own nationality was in peril, the navy had but little time to spare for the interests of Liberia. The battle for the freedom of the black man was being fought upon a grander scale than within her narrow limits. After that victory had been gained, our ships began once more to visit the African coast, though at rare intervals.

In 1873 it became my duty and my pleasure to visit the coast of Africa after an interval of twenty-five years. A quarter of a century had passed leaving its furrows upon my face as it does upon the face of every son of Adam, but the interest I had felt in that lonely colony was as fresh as ever. It was

therefore with unmixed satisfaction that I landed again at Cape Mesurado, and in an instant recalled the familiar streets and many of the faces that used to greet, me in Monrovia years ago.

I do not propose to go into the history of Liberia, that is to be found written in every cyclopedia—those who, run may read it. My own personal impressions will be of 10 more interest to you. These have vitality which comes of contact; a freshness not to be found in the musty pages of a book, however well written. Personal experience compared with history is the original compared with the photograph.

Cape Mesurado juts out into the sea, a promontory of gentle height, covered with that luxuriance of verdure which the tropics only can produce. The surf roars at its base, and the waters of the Mesurado river break over the bar by its side. The canoe of the native glides through the surf and over this bar with wonderful safety, and lands you at Monrovia, which lies just behind the cape, by the side of the river.

Monrovia presented the same sunny streets and shaded houses; the same evidences of comfort and of the absence of want that it did twenty-five years before; no great mark of improvement; no sad tokens of decay. In the meanwhile, however, more activity on the wharves; more canoes, laden with produces, coming down the river; steamships stopping eight times a month, landing and receiving cargo; more sugar mills; coffee trees growing where the forest, undisturbed, had waved before; all this, and more, indicated lite, business, commercial and agricultural prosperity.

I thought to myself as I walked again through the streets, "Liberia is a *fixed fact.* No reflux tide can wash her into the sea. She may advance more rapidly; she may appear to stand still, but in every event, whether rapid or slow in her course, Liberia is there to *slay.* " An island in the ocean of barbarism; "a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand," yet full of portent to Africa; a herald of the coming of that army of civilization which, by an inexorable law, exterminates where it can not convert.

But a great change manifested itself in the temper and tone of the people. Years ago I saw indicated everywhere that innate consciousness of inferiority, that deprecating manner which came of their birth in the slave 11 cabins of our own country; that absence of independent thought, that shrinking humility which feared to give an opinion, these came from the remembrance of that grand old institution, now happily of the past—the master. With warm affections towards their home, as they called America, favors eagerly remembered and wrongs as easily forgotten, they welcomed us, and bore with us, as we tacitly claimed that superiority which comes of being born white men. Now a change had taken place—a new generation had come, and a regeneration. We were welcomed with hospitality devoid of servility, and kindness devoid of fear. They bore themselves as free citizens of

a free republic should, and acknowledged gratefully the protection afforded them by the American flag; their gratitude being not more for the material aid than for the token of remembrance from the mother country.

Their president, Mr. Roberts, is an epitome of Liberian history. He stands pre-eminently the guiding genius of Liberia through all her struggles. That there is none equal to him in point of ability, combined with wisdom, and linked to virtue; that he is superior in all respects to every other Liberian, is no more an argument for the average inferiority of the colored race than the proud pre-eminence of George Washington is an argument for the inferiority of the American branch of the white race. The history of nations is written in the lives of individuals. President Roberts has shaped the destiny of his country, and as much as any other man living has contributed to the moral and physical good of the human race.

I dined at his table with the members of his cabinet, Ex-President Warner and the Haytien Consul, Mr. Yates. Most of them were new men to me, and I fancy were Liberians-born. They exhibited a general knowledge, which, from their isolated position, would have surprised me had I not, in previous experience, observed that men forced to read what others daily saw, were generally most accurate in their knowledge and most critical in their 12 deductions. The cabinet of Mr. Roberts seemed to me respectable men quite up to the average of men, whether white or black.

Without disparagement to others, I wish to make a brief mention of a pleasant visit to the house of a private citizen. This house was presided over by a lady, whose refined and elegant manners would have attracted attention and admiration in any drawing room. In her conversation she exhibited a brilliancy which was surprising, and an intelligence equally remarkable. She was Liberian-born, but spoke of America with the love she had inherited. Her great desire was to see for herself the country to which her own owed its birth. She has since visited New York, and has natuarally gone back to her home humiliated and disgusted. Caste—that impenetrable crust upon the surface of society—made it utterly impossible for her to even enjoy in comfort the amusements of the city, or the artistic treasures which her mentel gifts so well fitted her to appreciate. Along the streets and byways of Monrovia are to be seen the ordinary variety of human beings, young and old, rich and poor sick and well. You note the absence of grog-shops, and the presence of schools and churches. Like pilgrims as they are, or were, the prevailing and controlling sentiment of the community is a religious one. To land upon a foreign shore, to cut one's self off from kith and kin, to plunge into a wilderness, needs faith, absolute, vital, in the personality of God, and in His Divine protection. Add to this the emotional character of the negro, and you have the ordinary Liberian; law-abiding, and from his nature indolent, timid, willing to be helped, loth to help himself. I do not mean to compare this colonist with the great domineering, self-asserting, self-dependent Anglo-Saxon, who bullies and

conquers and rules wherever he emigrates, but I do mean to say that Liberia and her inhabitants will compare, and favorably too, with the towns and people scattered over Central and South America and Mexico, 13 settled by the Spaniard, the Italian and the Frenchman. Go where you will in those countries you see the same evidences of indolence, the same apparent lack of progress; yet these people *are* prospering in their way, gradually but surely reaching a higher place, and so I contend are the Liberians. Remember, the Liberians were poor, even to abject poverty; they had received no inheritance but the badge of their servitude; they were ignorant—the law in this free country of ours had taken care to keep them so—painfully ignorant, not only of the common principles of law by which they were to construct a government, but of the common principles of life by which they were to live.

In the growth of a new nation, in its consolidation and crystallization *time* forms no measure of *progress.* Not to go back, to stem the adverse tide, to wait, is absolutely to advance. To be where you were, after years of struggles against obstacles almost insurmountable, is a point gained, and a success accomplished. God measures people for Himself. He is patient, because He is eternal. Fifty years in the life of a nation born under such adverse circumstances, struggling under poverty and obloquy, predicted a failure by the prophets of caste, checked and thwarted by the priests and prophets of conservatism; unaided, uncheered, born in a wilderness, surrounded, hemmed in by barbarism, while just emerging from barbarism itself—fifty years in the life of such a nation is but a moment of time in the providence of God. Let us then endeavor in our imperfect way to imitate His patience and wait while we hope and pray.

If Monrovia, the capital, had not largely increased in wealth and population during these twenty-five years, Liberia had extended her boundaries, league by league, each additional possession encroaching upon or destroying some well-known haunt of the slave-trader, until for six hundred miles of the coast not a slave factory could be found or a slaver get a cargo. In the very nature of things 14 slavery was abhorrent to Liberia. It could not exist in or near her borders. It disappeared by virtue of the expelling force which exists in the powers of civilization. The two things could not be at the same time in the same place. By this moral alliance with the powers of the world, this silent partnership, which in the end banished the trade in human beings from the entire coast of Western Africa; this passive victory over the greatest sin of modern times; by this deed alone she has earned her title to the possession of her territory, and her friends and the friends of humanity have met with more than their reward.

An author says, in 1853: “The fact stands acknowledged before the world that Great Britain, after the expenditure of more than one hundred millions of dollars, has failed in suppressing the slave trade on one mile of coast beyond the limits of her colonies, while Liberia has swept it from nearly four

hundred miles of coast where it existed in its chief strength; has liberated 80,000 slaves, and bound by treaties 200,000 natives never to engage in the traffic in their brethren."

Liberia, geographically considered, is situated upon the west coast of Africa, between the latitudes 4° 20', and 7° 20' north. It extends from the British colony of Sierra Leone on the northwest, to the Pedro river on the southeast—a distance of 600 miles along the coast—the interior boundary varying from ten to forty miles from the seaboard—an area of 9700 square miles; every mile of which has been *purchased* from the original proprietors. No war of conquest marks this gradual enlargement of territory, or mars the record of the consequent progress. In 1873, the period of my last visit, Monrovia, the capital, had about 18,000 inhabitants. The total number of Americo-Liberians in the Republic at that time was estimated at 20,000. They are settled in sixteen towns, all of which have the characteristics of Monrovia, and are situated in propinquity to the sea, with the exception 15 of Millsburg, which is twenty miles up the St. Paul river, is an agricultural settlement. There are besides, 700,000 aborigines. The Krooman, whose tribe is scattered for eighty miles along the Liberian eoast, is the Bedouin of the African sea. He is the sailor man and boatman for every ship that sails down the coast. His skill in landing through surf and passing over the bars, is something wonderful. His canoe and himself are one and the same thing; together they glide over the swell of the ocean with speed and safety, now hidden and now seen. If capsized, he soon rights his boat, rolls in again, and paddles away. He is a sea gull upon the waters and a fish in the sea. Always willing and obedient, he is honest and trustworthy. He wants his wages when his contract is up, when he returns to his tribe and invests in another wife. Wives are his treasures; they are the support of his old age. He speaks a little English, of which he is very proud; and some shipmaster gives him a fantastic name—such as "Draw Bucket," or "Plug of Tobacco"—to which he clings as his badge of honor; while his merits are duly recorded in his "book," which he receives from his first employer and carries around his neck, each succeeding master increasing this wealth of recommendations. His mother is his great object of reverence; he never ventures to dispute her authority. In this respect he never comes of age. I once knew Sam Brown, a supposed convert to Christianity. To test his knowledge of the religion he professed, I asked him, in case his mother died, where she would go. He said, with indignation:" Suppose my mother want to go heaven, she go heaven; suppose she want to go hell, she go hell." There is quite a Kroo village in the suburbs of Monrovia; and the first evidence of Christianity is seen among them in the use of the shirt and smock. You can't convert a heathen unless you clothe him. There is something incongruous in the idea of a naked Christian.

The most important of the native tribes is the Mandingo, 16 which occupies nearly the whole of the western frontier of Liberia. These people are Mohamedans, and their influence extends into the interior of the continent as far as Soudan. Travelers in Africa agree upon the fact that Mahomedanism is spreading over that land with marvelous strides. I ask your attention to this

religious phenomenon in connection with the prospects of Liberia as a Christian community. If you believe that Christianity is the religion of the future in Africa, essential not only to her salvation, but to her temporal welfare, then I beg you to consider Liberia as an important bulwark against the encroachment of the followers of the Prophet, and as a point whence to start Christian propagandism into the heart of Africa. Most of the foreign settlements on the coast are simply trading posts, and the duty of Christianizing the country is lost sight of in the pursuit of gain. Liberia, on the contrary, is a Christian community, founded as such. Upon it, and upon its friends, devolves this positive mission of preaching the Gospel to the heathen. It is our duty to assist her in this mission by every possible means. Liberia is the initial point for American effort in the Christianization of Africa. The tendency of all the African tribes is to approach the sea; most of the tribal wars are made on this account. To reach the "beach," as they call it, to open trade with the white man, is the great object of their ambition. To occupy the "beach," therefore, to present there the bold front of Christianity, is to set back the tide of Mohamedanism, and to bring within the peaceful influences of Christianity the Pagan, when, after his struggles, he reaches the sea.

Among the other tribes living in the Liberian territory is the Grebo. This tribe occupies the land in the immediate vicinity of Cape Palmas, and is the one now threatening that portion of the republic with a war of extermination.

I mean no disrespect to the people of Great Britain when I say that the British trader on the coast of Africa 17 is among the most grasping and unscrupulous of men. He has succeeded the Frenchman, the Spaniard and the Portuguese, those reckless factors, in the prosecution of the slave trade, and has substituted a trade in rum, tobacco, and gunpowder—a trade not quite so baneful in its immediate results, but as pernicious as it dares to be. These articles the native is eager to buy, and the trader anxious to sell. Year by year the British government, yielding to the demand of the British trader, has increased its possessions upon the coast either by acquisition from the native kings, or by purchase from foreign powers, until it owns 1500 miles of the African shore. Liberia is now bounded on its northern and southern limits by British territory. But the trader, not content with thus stealing, as it were, in the rear of Liberian settlements with his contraband products, and enticing the willing natives to trade in violation of the laws of the republic, is inducing him to believe that if the poor and defenseless Liberian settler can be driven from his home, the trader can sell his goods without restriction, and at half the price; hence this war which is now trying the courage and the resources of the Liberians.

These two tribes (the Mandingoes and the Grebos), both of them intelligent and aggressive—the one warriors in the name of Mahomet, the other in the cause of greed and gain—form the most important element in the internal economy of the republic. The destiny of Liberia depends on the

conquest of these two opposing forces. Will she, hill she—she must meet and conquer, morally and physically, these antagonistic ideas, or be herself swept into the sea! I have faith that she will conquer, in the name of God and with the aid of America. We know that God will not fail them. Let us see to it that America does not fold her arms and give these struggling people the cold shoulder of indifference.

The other tribes that come under the jurisdiction of the government of Liberia are the Veys, the Pessehs, the 18 Barlines, and the Bassas. The Veys are amongst the most intelligent of the natives, and thirty years ago made an alphabet for themselves. Mahomedanism is rapidly spreading amongst them. None of these tribes have any special significance. They constitute, however, the material nearest at hand for the missionary and the philanthropist. According to my observation among the heathens, conversion to Christianity is not a sudden thing; it is an influence gradually permeating and pervading, until a community finds itself raised to a higher plane—converted to a nobler faith. This I anticipate will, in a measurable period of time, be the result of the moral influence of the Americo-African upon the surrounding mass of barbarism. One by one the dark superstitions will disappear in the ever-increasing light, till in the brightness of mid-day the Son of Righteousness will cast His beneficent rays over the whole area of that broad and now benighted land.

I found the climate of Liberia decidedly improved since my first visit. As the land is cleared, miasmatic influences become less fatal. The native-born Liberians are as healthy as the natives of any other tropical country. The emigrant takes his risks, as all must do who migrate from a temperate to a torrid zone. The white man has no business in Africa. " *Similia similibus curantar.* " "Like things are cured by like." To the black man—the Ethiopian—is given the mission of laboring in the vineyard until he comes to his own again. Time enters largely into the problem of regenerating Africa, but it will be done and find its reward in eternity. Without contesting the theories of the savans, I take it upon myself to say that to the white and black man is given the work of rehabilitating the world, each in its own latitude and in its own way.

The government of Liberia is apparently stable and well administered. It would be an anomaly in political history. to find the offshoot of a republican country, establishing for itself any other than a republican form of government, 19 Her constitution therefore is similar to our own, containing one proviso, however, to which I wish to draw your attention. Citizens of Liberia are not only absolutely prohibited from owning slaves, but from being directly or indirectly interested in slave property, whether held within or without their own country. This constitution was promulgated in 1847, or twenty-eight years ago. Who in that year of grace would have dared to propose such an amendment to our constitution? Nay, my friends, at this very day we have it upon record and under protest of the President of the United States that upon the Island of Cuba there are negroes held in slavery by

American citizens. Think of it; these African pioneers, poor, derided, woolly-headed men, teaching us a lesson, setting us an example as law makers, a lesson and an example which we have been loath to follow even up to the present day.

Do you appreciate how much we are responsible for the perpetuation of the institution of slavery upon this Island of Cuba. The United States spends 60,000,000 of dollars annually in the purchase of the products of this island, and this is the money which supports that interminable struggle between Spain and her colony. Withdraw thence American capital, expatriate every American citizen holding slaves there, and the 'insurgents,' so called, would need no other encouragement, and this unholy war, waged in the interests of slavery, would end without any other "intervention."

Liberia came into existence as a nation preceded by no war; she was born of no internecine strife, but in harmony with her mission, she declared herself a free and independent nation, and was promptly and gracefully acknowledged as such by the great powers of the world—the mother country alone hesitating to receive as an equal her neglected child—and in an humble and lowely manner, becoming her color and condition, she peacefully and quietly took her back seat in the family of nations.

I say that Liberia has a government apparently stable. 20 Compare it in the twenty-eight years of its existence with the government of France in her throes with monarchism, pseudo-republicanism, imperialism and communism; "everything by turns, and nothing long," or with that of Spain in her dynastic revolutions. During all this time, only one serious crisis in her career—one single departure from her traditions. One single traitor to her principles, and he met his death, not by the hand of the law, but by the sea; dragged down into its depths by the weight of his ill gotten gains. You know the story of Mr. Roy, who, in 1871, endeavored to take forcible possession of the government, was defeated in his object, and was drowned while attempting to escape in a British vessel lying in the offing.

It seems to me that the people of Liberia are in the hands of a Guiding Power, which carries them hither and thither, always safely, to the end that they may become the arbiters of the fate of their race, the peaceful conquerors of a new world. I know it is the fashion to sneer at such unscientific theories; but, my friends, as I grow older, as I watch the ebbing and the flowing of the human tides, as I read of human destiny moulded to serve Divine ends, I feel how insignificant men are in themselves, how great they are in the hands of God.

I say that the government has been in the main well administered. The world, so called, *i. e.,* the greed, the superstition the bigotry, the clannish conservatism, added to the thoughtlessness and the indifference of the world, combine to crush out these abstract notions, these impracticable ideas

of the mere philanthropist, to deny the capacity of certain inferior races for self-government, to prognosticate failures, to come in with malevolent predictions, to settle the whole matter finally with a complacent "I told you so."

There is no denying that Liberia has had her crises; that she has trembled on the verge of ruin; that her rulers have made mistakes; but I contend that she has recovered from these shocks with increased stability and without the 21 barbarism of bloodshed. Run your eye over the pages of contemporaneous history; read of the bloody executions, the fusilades in France; count the victims to the garrote in Cuba; number the exiles to Siberia; count the expatriated in New Caledonia, all in the name of order and good government; then turn to the records of our own eventful career, or to the modest pages of Liberian history, and tell me which of all the powers is built upon the surest foundation, which contains within itself the best promise of stability and permanence. Like our own the government of Liberia is based upon the will of the people, and although sometimes swayed from the path of wisdom by popular clamor, it has in the main been administered for the good of the people. Resting as it does upon education, secular and religious, it possesses a constantly increasing tendency towards perfect excellence and consequent permanence.

I dislike to he considered a constant apologist, but the republic of Liberia is on trial, and she needs the services of even so poor a pleader as myself. If we, gentlemen, have real faith in our own institutions, we *must* also have faith in the institutions of our little sister republic. And in order to form an unbiased opinion we must lose sight of the question of *color.* Fortunately for the future of Liberia the homogeneousness of her population removes one of her greatest dangers. In our own country the question of *caste* is yet to be fought out, and in my opinion upon its result will depend the permanence of our own Government, and the stability of our own institutions.

"For in this Union you have set Two kinds of men in adverse rows Each loathing each."

Events are rapidly shaping themselves, and at this present moment we hardly know how swiftly we are approaching the crisis which is to determine the question of *color* —of equal rights to all men, without regard to color, in 22 the administration of the government of this country. While, therefore, we remember Liberia, let us not forget ourselves, or the day may come when she can point out to us the fatal rock upon which we split.

I do not apprehend peril for Liberia from incapacity of her rulers, or instability in her institutions. She has had her Roberts, her Benson, her Benedict, and hosts of others, good and true, and she will find their peers in the time of her need. She has her schools and her churches, and under their tuition,

her next generation will improve upon this as this has upon the last. She will resist the heathen and drive back the Mahomedan. The danger I *do* apprehend for her is the danger of absorption.

They themselves seem to have had a half prophetic dread of this absorption. In his earliest days Elijah Johnson, amidst the dangers of a threatened attack by the surrounding savage tribes, being offered a force of marines from a British man-of-war if he would only cede a few feet of land on which to plant a British flag, promptly refused, saying: “We want no flagstaff put up here that would cost more to get down again than it would to whip the natives.” *Now this danger is at their very doors.*

A few years ago there was a rage for “internal improvements” in Liberia. For this purpose a ring was formed; $500,000 were borrowed in London, which netted $425,000. This sum was again reduced by paying the first two years' interest in advance, and then from the remainder was deducted the agents' commissions, until finally it reached Monrovia in gold and useless goods to the aggregate amount of $200,000, and this residue has disappeared without an “internal improvement” to show for it. To use a slang phrase, “We know how it is ourselves.” From Canada to California every village and town in this country has gone through the same experience; but poor Liberia, with an income of, at most, $100,000 a year, is unable to pay either principal or interest. She lies at the mercy of her bondholders—England, with her lion's paw upon the 23 commerce of the world, would, and perhaps *will* eventually, assume the debt for the trifling consideration of possession. It is in fact a mortgage upon the integrity of Liberia. Already England occupies 1,500 miles of the coast; already she hems in on the north Liberia, the most coveted of all; already the British trader is encroaching upon her boundaries and stealing behind her settlements. Slowly and surely, as the anaconda swallows the kid, the process of absorption will go on to its consummation, England herself almost powerless to stay it unless we intervene.

I don't mean by intervention that cold-blooded indifferentism which measures every national emotion with the line and plummet of international law, which restrains within the bonds of obsolete diplomacy every beat of the nation's heart, which reveres the memories of Kosciusko and Lafayette, and permits the bodies of Ryan and Fry to lie in desecrated graves at Santiago de Cuba, unwept, unhonored, and unsung. I mean that warm sympathetic intervention which will say to all the world that, happen what may, *the United States of North America will see to it that no power on earth shalt obliterate from the map of Africa the infant Republic of Liberia.*

In this coming centennial year, the proudest anniversary in recorded history, which proclaims in trumpet tones the triumphant fact that a government by the people, and for the people, is not only the best, but the stablest on earth, let us extend to our own offspring the right hand of fellowship, and declare that by every legitimate means we will help her forward in that career which has led us to *our* present proud pre-eminence. In the language of another, who visited Liberia at the same time

I did, and came away as deeply impressed, "We are bound to help them by all the considerations that have force with men and nations. By interest and sympathy we are bound. By interest, because Liberia, the only American colony on the west coast of Africa, once strong, and resting under the protection of the American flag, would open to us the 24 inexhaustible riches of Africa, and in so doing would revive the lost glories of American commerce, which, to our national shame and disgrace, has almost faded from the seas. By sympathy, because of the close parallel between their history and our own; like us they went forth from a land where they could no longer remain with honor, to battle for the dear sake of freedom with poverty, with privation, with hostile savages, and with all the thousand difficulties of an unknown and barbarous land; like us they struggled, if not with oppression, still with neglect, and like us they conquered; like us they have declared and maintained themselves a free republic, and if in the less than thirty years of their national existence they have not accomplished all that they desired, the failure has been largely owing to our own indifference to the children whom we sent out from among us, and then left to take care of themselves. Their love for us is strong. Like most strong affections, ill-treatment only seems to augment its force. Their confidence in us, though so abused, is still unabated. Can we, in this their hour of need and danger, pass by coldly on the other side? Surely it has been want of knowledge, not want of interest, that has so long held us supine. Let us make the parallel, so strong in the past, hold good for the future. Let us strengthen the hands of Liberia, that she may be enabled to do for Africa what *we* have already done for America."

Fortunately we *can* intervene in the cause of Liberia if requested so to do by her government. Article 8 of the treaty between the United States of America and Liberia, concluded at London, October 21, 1862, says:

"The United States Government engages never to interfere unless solicited by the government of Liberia in the affairs between the aboriginal inhabitants and the republic of Liberia in the jurisdiction and territories of the republic. Should any United States citizens suffer loss, in person or property, from violence by the aboriginal inhabitants, and 25 the government of the republic of Liberia should not be able to bring the aggressor to justice, the United States Government engages, a requisition having *been first* made therefor by the Liberian government, to lend such aid as may be required. Citizens of the United States residing in the territories of the republic of Liberia are desired to abstain from all such intercourse with the aboriginal inhabitants as will tend to the violation of law and a disturbance of the peace of the country."

I violate no official propriety when I inform you that in all probability a ship of war is now on her way to Liberia for the purpose of protecting American interests, and of aiding the authorities, if so requested, in the suppression of insurrection among the nations. That this intervention will be

effectual, not only directly in suppressing the natives, but indirectly in moderating the zeal of the white traders, I have not the slightest doubt.*

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* Since the foregoing address was delivered the U.S. S. Alaska, under the command of Capt. A. A. Semmes, has visited Liberia. A satisfactory treaty has been made with the natives and for the present, Liberia has no danger to apprehend from that quarter.

This assistance to Liberia is of a temporary nature. What she needs and what *we* need is a permanent naval force on her coast, and she has almost a right to demand it, for Liberia is our only colony, the only off-shoot of the parent stem, the only American outpost on the confines of barbarism; it is our duty to protect her for the sake of our institutions and for the sake of our religion.

I therefore propose that our Government be requested to establish a line of mail steamers, to consist of the smallest class of naval vessels, half-manned and half-armed, to run monthly from any designated port in the United States to Liberia, touching on that coast at Monrovia and Cape Palmas, and coaling each way at Porto Grande, Cape da Verde islands. These vessels to retain the character of men-of war, and to carry no passengers except officials of either government.

The distance from Norfolk to Monrovia is about 4,000 miles. The quantity of coal required for such round voyage would be about 320 tons, aggregating for a monthly service about 4,000 tons per annum. These ships could perform this duty at a cost for coal of about $50,000.

A law of Congress appropriating this amount and authorizing the President to employ the vessels on this duty would be a great point gained for Liberia, by insuring a regular mail communication, and by having constantly on the coast one or other of these ships of war.

It is no new thing for men-of-war to be employed in this service. England began her foreign postal system in this way, which, subsequently taken up by private companies, now ramifies over the globe and touches every port. The same result would follow in this case. The merchantman would follow the man-of-war, and thus the initial step would be taken in securing the trade of Liberia to our country. I see no other way at present of inaugurating a direct trade with Liberia, for our commercial pride has fallen so low and our capital has become so timid that it cares not and dares not to venture upon the sea. It is in vain that we appeal to patriotism, in vain we utter the truism that no nation can be truly great without an external commerce. Our merchants cross the seas, and point with complacency to the foreign flag waving over their heads, and bring back their goods in foreign bottoms, without any sense of the national shame that ensues. It would also be utilizing the navy,

which in time of peace could find no nobler employment. It would, indeed, be but a continuation of the aid which the navy has heretofore given to Liberia, and a new title to its claim of guardianship. I submit this proposition to you, gentlemen, for your consideration, and if it meets your approval, I suggest that you endeavor to put it into practicable shape during the present session of Congress.

The Government of the United States can give to Liberia no other material aid. We cannot pay her debts nor fight 27 her battles. We *can* throw over her the mantle of our protection. We can say that we will not see her absorbed by any European Power, nor obliterated by any savage horde; but, after all, Liberia must work out her own salvation.

"Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow."

So I would say to Liberians. The history of your country is full of instances of heroism in conflict with savages; of suffering from scarcity of food; of endurance of the effects of climate. Full, I say, of instances of heroism and self-denial on the part of your predecessors; learn from their history to practice their virtues now.

Thirty years ago, Commodore Perry cautioned the colonists against a growing timidity, a tendency to rely upon others for the defence of their lives and property. He advised them to build block-houses, as *our* forefathers did in the olden time; to become accustomed to the use of arms; to organize at every settlement; and learn, not only to repel attack, but to assume the offensive, thereby instilling into the surrounding savages that wholesome fear which is the greatest safeguard. This advice is pertinent to the present emergency. Do not permit your enemies—either in front or rear—to say that yours is a cowardly race; that you are only fit to be bummers in the rear of an army, and not pioneers in its van. I have heard this sneer uttered, but I have also seen the assault upon Fort Wagner by the gallant 54th Massachusetts regiment of colored troops, under the immortal Shaw; such a charge and such a carnage was brave enough and bloody enough to redeem the race for all time from the base stigma of cowardice which the enemies of the black man have tried, and with too much success, to fasten upon him.

Be brave also in the face of nature as in the face of the native. Attack your forests, clear away the wilderness from before you. Agriculture is the handmaid of commerce, and you cannot have one without the other. You are a gregarious race; you love to loiter about the towns, 28 and idle in the settlements. This growing tendency must be eradicated; your sons must be taught that the tiller of the soil is the nobleman of the land. From the bosom of mother earth comes the real wealth of the nation.

Bear the burden of your national debt cheerfully. It has been imposed upon you by no fault of yours, but it is none the less your duty to sustain the national credit: for this purpose submit to taxation; remember that repudiation of the debt would be followed by extinction of the republic, and that your failure as a nation would throw you back into the confused heap of mistakes which the world would willingly attribute to the imbecility of your race. You *must* carry this lead upon your shoulders; bear it cheerfully while you *must,* and reduce it as fast as you can. Consider what a load of debt this parent country of yours is carrying for the sake your race, for the vindication of your title as Liberians —free men.

One word more of gratuitous advice and my address will be finished.

The question of the treatment of the aborigines of a country is very complicated. We ourselves are not remarkably successful in the treatment of the Indians; at one time subject to the rigors of military law, and then to some pet scheme of the philanthropist, they seem, as the poor brute in the hands of vivisecting scientists, only to exist for the purpose of being experimented upon, until their final extinction, at no distant day, uncivilized, unredeemed.

But the case is different in Africa, more difficult of control, with less moral and physical strength to control it. We may take for granted that the native African is unconquerable, inextinguishable, and that he must eventually either form an integral part of your new nation, or become a hostile skirmisher on its borders. In either event, the manner of treating him by the conquering race is a question which must be seriously considered.

It is characteristic of an emancipated people to forget the source from which they sprung—the ground upon which they once stood. Having suffered from “man's inhumanity to man,” there is a strong tendency to inflict upon an inferior race the cruelties and wrongs under which they once groaned; and so I have observed in Liberia a want of forbearance toward the native, an exaction from these ignorant people of the utmost rigor of the law, a domineering of the superior over the inferior race. I need not say to you that such treatment reacts upon yourself. The world is not prepared to justify harsh ruling of the negro by the negro. Whatever its own practice, it expects from you, and justly, too, that the memory of your past state should make you considerate and merciful to those over whom yeu rule. You must lead, not drive, these ignorant and wilful children of the woods; you must coax, not force them into the garments of civilization. I know how difficult it is to exercise forbearance towards, and patience with, a rude people, who are governed by no moral principle, and are amenable to no law, but as a nation you must at least avoid injustice, and as individuals you must shun cruelty. Such conduct is demanded by your religion, and is in harmony with your

true policy. In this manner you will win your way to empire in Africa, and secure the respect and sympathy of the world at large.

I trust you will pardon these admonitions for the sake of the spirit in which they are uttered, and remember that— Nothing good is lightly won, Nothing won is lost. Every good deed nobly done, Will repay the cost. Leave to Heaven in humble trust, All you will to do; But if you'd succed, you must Paddle your own canoe.